



BIOGRAPHY – '08

A consummate entertainer and world-renowned humanitarian, Jerry Lewis is not just a cultural icon in the United States – he's one of the most easily recognized personalities on the planet. Widely regarded as a comic genius, regarded as one of the true giants of the motion picture industry, and internationally celebrated for his vast contributions to humanity, Jerry personifies the term "living legend."

Newsweek, in 2001, listed the most recognizable people on the planet:

1. Muhammad Ali;
2. President Bush;
3. Margaret Thatcher;
4. Walter Cronkite;
5. A tie between the Pope and Jerry Lewis.

MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY ASSOCIATION

"People think I show up on Labor Day -- that's hysterical," says Jerry Lewis about his role on the world's most successful televised fund-raiser, the Jerry Lewis MDA Telethon. Since first committing himself to MDA's cause in 1951, Jerry has single-handedly turned "muscular dystrophy" into a household term. As National Chairman of the Muscular Dystrophy Association for some five decades, he leads the fight against more than 40 neuromuscular diseases with fierce determination in behalf of the more than 1 million Americans affected by these disorders. Jerry has won the admiration and respect of millions for his unstinting dedication to providing hope and help for a diverse cross section of people around the world – people of all ages, races and backgrounds – who live with muscle-wasting, often fatal, diseases.

Jerry's determined efforts to raise funds for MDA's worldwide research and comprehensive services programs are turning the hope of a better future into reality. In 1986 and 1987, MDA-backed investigators identified the genetic cause of Duchenne muscular dystrophy (the most common and fatal childhood form). Building on that breakthrough, MDA-backed researchers have discovered the specific causes of most genetic neuromuscular disorders, including other forms of muscular dystrophy, the spinal muscular atrophies (one form of which is the leading genetic cause of infant death) and Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease (the most common group of neuromuscular disorders). Thanks to Jerry's leadership, MDA scientists have developed improved treatments for some neuromuscular disorders, and are on the brink of finding high-tech cures and treatments for the most mysterious neuromuscular diseases.

The Association also leads the worldwide research effort on amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), more commonly referred to as "Lou Gehrig's disease" after the legendary New York Yankees first baseman whose career was cut short by the disease. Jerry and MDA have made ALS one of their prime targets since the Association's earliest days – when Gehrig's widow, Eleanor, assisted Jerry by serving as MDA national campaign chairperson. MDA's ALS Division has its own Web site and operates two dozen MDA/ALS research/clinical centers devoted exclusively to treating people with ALS and conducting cutting-edge studies.

In February 2001, Jerry led a delegation of MDA scientists and clients to testify before a subcommittee of the U.S. Senate, chaired by Senator Arlen Specter, resulting in the introduction of the MD-CARE Act (S.805), a first step toward securing a dramatic boost in federal research funding for all forms of muscular dystrophy. Because MDA research has created the groundwork necessary to development of treatments for the muscular dystrophies, Jerry told the Senate, it's time for the federal government to infuse needed funds to accomplish the next step – saving lives through treatments and cures based on the foundation of knowledge built by MDA.

THE TELETHON

In 1956, Jerry and his partner Dean Martin hosted a television program on WNEW-TV in New York, raising \$600,000 to benefit the fledgling Muscular Dystrophy Association of America. In 1957 and 1959, Jerry did two more shows -- which he began calling "telethons" -- that together raised \$1,240,000 more for "his kids." The 1966 Jerry Lewis MDA Telethon was the first to be held on Labor Day weekend -- also the first to raise more than \$1 million, leading Jerry to refer to then MDA National Goodwill Ambassador Paul Carter Hawkins as "our million-dollar baby."

Since then, the Telethon's highly successful format has remained largely the same. Jerry Lewis steps out onto the stage and says, "We plan to entertain you, to educate you and -- hopefully -- to touch your hearts." Each year the goal is the same -- to raise one dollar more than the year before. In 1999, that "one dollar more" actually brought the Labor Day Telethon's historical total to an amount of \$1,700,000,000 in pledges and contributions -- thus cementing Jerry's status as the most successful fund-raiser ever.

Today, the mere mention of the word "Telethon" evokes the image of Jerry Lewis on a Labor Day Monday afternoon -- his tie undone, tears brimming in his eyes, singing "You'll Never Walk Alone." The Telethon is now an American tradition, broadcast by more than 200 television stations across the country -- MDA's "Love Network" (the largest independent network in broadcasting history). These days, the Telethon's combined audience ratings continue to make it the most watched show of its kind -- and that's not counting the countless numbers of people around the world who watch the Telethon via streaming audio/video technology on the World Wide Web.

NUMBER-ONE VOLUNTEER

An hour or so after each Telethon ends, Jerry Lewis and the MDA staff begin planning the next year's show. But that's only the beginning of Jerry's voluntary work for MDA.

Jerry not only spends a good part of the year helping to plan each Telethon, he also works intensively with MDA's national sponsors and MDA staff. Over the years, he's made hundreds of appearances on behalf of MDA at business conventions; before civic, fraternal and youth groups; and at meetings of MDA's Board of Directors. In fact, hardly a day passes on which Jerry doesn't meet, work for, phone or just talk about youngsters and adults living with neuromuscular diseases and MDA's efforts in their behalf. He corresponds with many of those served by MDA and visits them when he is in their areas. The charges for his long-distance telephone calls to people with neuromuscular diseases over the years would "probably match the national debt!" Jerry jokes. As he tours the nation on professional and MDA engagements, he often has long talks with families served at some of MDA's 230 hospital-affiliated clinics that his Telethons have helped establish.

Long before his 2001 testimony before Congress, Jerry was effective in enlisting aid for hundreds of thousands of people with neuromuscular disorders through legislative action. In 1973, he appeared before the California Legislature and won approval for the appropriation of \$1 million for the Jerry Lewis Neuromuscular Disease Research Center at the University of California at Los Angeles, one of several major research/clinical centers established by MDA. During a visit to the White House on March 16, 1981, Jerry presented President Ronald Reagan with a framed photograph of the UCLA center in gratitude for the president's invaluable support – as governor of California – of the state's historic Neuromuscular Disease Research Act of 1973. The act made possible the partnership between the state and MDA that resulted in construction of this major research facility.

HUMANITARIAN AWARDS

"Jerry Lewis is a man for all seasons, all people and all times. His name has, in the hearts of millions, become synonymous with peace, love, and brotherhood." The late Secretary of Defense Les Aspin, then a congressman from Wisconsin, penned those words in 1977 in the conclusion of his nomination of Jerry for the Nobel Peace Prize. Never in the history of show business has an entertainer been so honored.

In 1984, the government of France officially recognized that country's legendary admiration of Jerry Lewis by giving him its two most distinguished awards. First, Lewis was made a Commander in the Order of Arts and Letters, and was extolled by French Minister of Culture Jack Lang for his "human qualities and generosity. You are a child's friend, and a model for adults." Later that same year, Jerry was inducted into the Legion of Honor by the decree of President Francois Mitterand. Legion membership honors individuals whose accomplishments demonstrate extraordinary public service.

Back in the United States, on June 8, 1985, the Defense Department presented Jerry with its highest civilian award – the Medal for Distinguished Public Service. The citation that accompanies the engraved gold medal reads, in part: "His service has had a profound effect on the youth of our country, on men and women in uniform today and their children, and on those children who shall one day serve our country in its defense."

In December 1996, the American Medical Association presented its Lifetime Achievement Awards to Jerry and MDA "for significant and lasting contributions to the health and welfare of humanity." Jerry was honored for his decades of dedication to MDA, becoming only the fifth person in AMA history to receive this award.

As National Chairman of MDA, Jerry has devoted two-thirds of his lifetime to the effort to eradicate neuromuscular diseases. His unflagging, year-round work for this cause has endeared him to millions. Under Jerry's leadership, the Association has been – and will continue to be – the recognized leader in the worldwide fight against these diseases.

OTHER HONORS

In addition to his induction into the Legion of Honor and his Nobel Peace Prize nomination, Jerry has received widespread recognition for his role in the fight against neuromuscular diseases and his personal commitment to those affected by them. In 1971, the AFL-CIO presented Jerry with the Murray-Green Award for Community

Services, the labor organization's highest honor. In September 1976, the U.S. Senate unanimously adopted a resolution of appreciation to Jerry "for his outstanding contributions in the fight against muscular dystrophy." And in June 1978, the communications industry honored him with the NATPE (National Association of Television Program Executives) Award of the Year for his humanitarian efforts in raising funds through his annual MDA Telethons.

Jerry was honored at the Research America Advocacy Awards Dinner at the National Academy of Science in Washington, D.C. on March 19, 2002. He received the Variety Club International Lifetime Achievement Award on May 26, 2002. Jerry received the same honor from Rotary International in Barcelona, Spain on June 23, 2002.

In June 1978, Jerry also received the Jefferson Award for the Greatest Public Service Benefiting the Disadvantaged in special ceremonies held at the Supreme Court. The Jefferson Award is presented annually by the American Institute for Public Service to nine outstanding Americans for highest achievement in the field of public service in the United States.

Following the ceremonies, Jerry was invited to the White House, where he had a private meeting in the Oval Office with President Jimmy Carter. Afterward, President Carter praised Jerry for his many years of devoted service in behalf of those with neuromuscular diseases.

In January 1980, the Touchdown Club of Washington honored Jerry with its prestigious Hubert H. Humphrey Humanitarian Award, given annually to the individual who best exemplifies the ideals and courage of the late senator.

Jerry also received the N. Neal Pike Prize for Service to the Handicapped from the Boston University School of Law in November 1984. The award, presented by Boston University President John R. Silber, "recognizes individuals who have made special contributions that have improved the lives of people with disabilities."

In 1987, Mercy College in Westchester, N.Y., honored Lewis with a Doctor of Humane Letters degree, while Jerry gave the commencement address to the graduating class. Mercy College President Wilbert J. LeMelle described Jerry as “a shining example for people everywhere that one person can have an impact on society and change the world.”

The following year, Jerry was honored in the American debut of the Award of Professionalism and Achievement from the Eterna Watch Corporation in recognition of his “outstanding humanitarian contributions and dedication to the Muscular Dystrophy Association.” In 1993, he also received a Doctor of Humane Letters degree from Emerson College in Boston, for his work as the Association’s voluntary National Chairman.

LEGENDARY ENTERTAINER

One of the most successful performers in show business – with worldwide box office gross receipts of his films in excess of \$800 million – Jerry Lewis has received global acclaim for his unique ability and style with both comedy and drama. Best known for his comedic genius, he's considered among the elite in the history of comedy. He has an exceptional feel for comic timing and possesses all the other unique qualities of a great clown. Critic Harriet Van Horne described Jerry’s screen persona as “a sort of witless genius,” while Hollywood director Leo McCarey called Lewis “the Pied Piper of the business, the heir to the mantle of Charlie Chaplin and Harold Lloyd.”

In 1991, Jerry received two impressive honors as the show business industry recognized his lifetime of achievement. On January 13, he received the Comic Life Achievement Award during cable television’s annual ACE Awards. The National Association of Broadcasters paid tribute to Jerry by inducting him into the Broadcast Hall of Fame on April 17.

Jerry was inducted into the International Humor Hall of Fame in 1992. And on February 22, 1998, Jerry received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Comedy Hall of Fame.

In 1999, legendary film director Martin Scorsese presented Jerry Lewis with a career Golden Lion award at the Venice International Film Festival. Lewis was honored as “an extraordinary example of the total filmmaker: scriptwriter, director and protagonist of his films, therefore fully responsible for his work.”

BORN TO BE IN SHOW BUSINESS

Jerry Lewis was destined to be in show business. He was born Joseph Levitch on March 16, 1926, in Newark, N.J., to Danny and Rae Lewis -- both professional entertainers. While his father, as Jerry puts it, “was the total entertainer,” his mother played piano at New York City radio station WOR, made musical arrangements and was her husband’s musical director.

At age 5, Jerry made his debut at a hotel in New York’s Borscht Belt Circuit, singing, “Brother Can You Spare a Dime?” as his father, the master of ceremonies, watched from the wings. By the time he was 15, Lewis had perfected a comic routine that’s still known as “The Record Player,” miming and silently mouthing lyrics of operatic and popular songs played on a phonograph offstage.

He attended high school in Irvington, N.J., quitting after two years, a move that he has often regretted. Then came a variety of jobs, including counterman behind a drugstore lunch counter, usher at Loew’s State in New York City and shipping clerk in a hat factory.

Meanwhile, dressed in a drape jacket and pegged pants, Jerry continued to brave the offices of booking agents. When he finally got a booking, it was at a burlesque house in Buffalo, where he was hooted off the stage with shouts of “Bring on the broads” before he’d even started his act.

Disheartened and ready to give up, Jerry was encouraged to keep trying by veteran burlesque comedian Max Coleman, who had worked with Jerry's father for years in burlesque. Max Coleman went to Jerry and got his attention, telling him, "If you're quitting, you're no son of Danny Lewis."

MARTIN AND LEWIS

In July 1946, Jerry was performing at the 500 Club in Atlantic City and one of the other entertainers suddenly quit. Jerry, who had already worked with a young crooner named Dean Martin at the Glass Hat in New York, suggested Dean as a replacement. They started out performing separately but were soon ad-libbing together, improvising insults and jokes, squirting seltzer water, hurling bunches of celery and creating a general atmosphere of zaniness. In less than 18 weeks, their salaries soared from \$250 a week to \$5,000, and a partnership was born that dominated show business for 10 years, turning both men into household names.

After movie producer Hal Wallis saw the two perform at the Copacabana in New York City, he signed the duo to a movie contract with Paramount Pictures.

Of their 1949 film debut, "My Friend Irma," prominent New York Times critic Bosley Crowther wrote: "We could go along with the laughs which were fetched by a new mad comedian, Jerry Lewis by name. The swift eccentricity of his movements, the harrowing features of his face, and the squeak of his vocal protestations ... have flair. His idiocy constitutes the burlesque of an idiot, which is something else again. He's the funniest thing in the picture."

For 10 years, Martin and Lewis sandwiched 16 money-making films between nightclub engagements, personal appearances and television bookings. Their last film together was "Hollywood or Bust" in 1956. On July 25 of that year, the two made their last nightclub appearance together at the Copacabana, exactly 10 years to the day from when they began as a team.

JERRY LEWIS GOES SOLO

From then on, Jerry was constantly on the move. He recorded several records and albums -- one of which, "Rock-a-Bye Your Baby," released by Decca Records, sold nearly 4 million copies. With increased confidence, Jerry plunged into screenwriting, producing and directing as well as acting. In the spring of 1959, a contract between Paramount and Jerry Lewis Productions was signed – then the biggest single transaction in film history for the exclusive services of one star – specifying a payment of \$10 million plus 60 percent of the profits for 14 films over a seven-year period. The partnership was dissolved in 1965.

Jerry then moved to Columbia Pictures, where he produced, directed and starred in "Three on a Couch"; then to 20th Century-Fox to write, produce and star in "The Big Mouth" and "Don't Raise the Bridge, Lower the River" for Columbia release. He then went to England to direct Sammy Davis Jr. and Peter Lawford in "One More Time" for United Artists, before moving to Warner Brothers to produce, direct and star in "Which Way to the Front?"

After a hiatus of several years, Jerry returned to the screen with "Hardly Working." Since then, his motion picture credits have included acting in such films as Martin Scorsese's "The King of Comedy," "Arizona Dream" with Johnny Depp and Faye Dunaway, and 1994's "Funny Bones," filmed on location in Great Britain. He's also made numerous television dramatic appearances, among them the ABC made-for-TV movie "Fight for Life" and five episodes of the Emmy-nominated series "Wiseguy." His autobiography, *Jerry Lewis in Person*, written with Herb Gluck, was published in 1982.

In 1995, Jerry fulfilled a lifelong dream when he went to Broadway and starred in "Damn Yankees" for six months. The show then toured the United States and played in London until August 1997.

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR

A fact not widely known in the United States is that Jerry Lewis has been named Best Director of the Year eight times in Europe since 1960. The French film critic Robert Benayoun wrote: "I consider Jerry Lewis, since the death of Buster Keaton, to be the foremost comic artist of the time. He corresponds to his era both reflecting and criticizing our civilization." French director Jean-Luc Godard remarked: "Jerry Lewis is the only American director who has made progressive films ... he is much better than Chaplin and Keaton."

In February 1993, Jerry journeyed to Paris to receive yet another recognition from his French fans. He was given the Cinematech's most prestigious honor, a 10-day homage acknowledging his body of work.

Although gratified by such esteem, Jerry values the words of his friend, President John F. Kennedy, engraved on a plaque in his dressing room more: "There are three things that are real ... God, human folly and laughter. Since the first two are beyond comprehension, we must do the best we can with the third."

INVENTOR

Jerry is also a successful inventor, whose patented "video assist" is currently used on virtually every movie in production today. Jerry created this closed-circuit television system to facilitate motion picture production.

THE NOT-SO-NUTTY PROFESSOR

In addition to his varied entertainment, philanthropic and family responsibilities, Jerry has also served as an adjunct professor at the University of Southern California, where he taught a graduate course in film direction. *The Total Film Maker*, a book based on recordings of 480 hours of his classroom lectures, was published by Random House in

1971. And since the book hit the stands, it became mandatory reading in every university and film school in the United States, as well as Continental Europe. *The Films of Jerry Lewis* book is one of the most comprehensive studies of one man's body of work in the motion picture industry.

THE "REAL" JERRY LEWIS

Behind the pratfalls, the jokes and the public persona, Jerry Lewis is a devoted family man who always carries snapshots of his family in his pockets for luck. The entertainer has a daughter, Danielle, born in 1992, in addition to five sons – Gary, Ron, Scott, Chris and Anthony – and nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. On February 13, 1983, Jerry married Sandra "Sam" Pitnick of Winston-Salem, N.C.

A frequent MDA Telethon highlight is a performance by Jerry's number-one son and his band -- Gary Lewis and the Playboys -- and the Telethon cameras regularly catch Sam and Danielle sitting in their customary front row seats. It's also no coincidence that the official Jerry Lewis Web site, <http://www.jerrylewiscomedy.com>, is hosted by Jerry's son, Chris.

Jerry is famous for his love of children, and the immense popularity he enjoys among them is hardly surprising. "I get paid for doing what children are punished for," he reasons. "In doing this, I can help them get rid of their hostility quotient." Or, as one 14-year-old fan put it: "Jerry is just a nice big kid who makes us laugh. Kids love him because he's really one of us."

Jerry summed it up himself when he said -- in response to the countless well-wishers who wrote to commemorate his 76th birthday in March 2002: "76? You got the birth date right, but the age is wrong! I'm only 9 ... remember? Always have been, always will be."

The motto that best expresses Jerry's ongoing love affair with humanity is this: "I shall pass through this world but once. Any good, therefore, that I can do or any kindness

that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer nor neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.”

WHAT'S NEXT?

After 75 years as a performer, Jerry keeps busy with a myriad of projects. In the last 18 months, has sold the rights to his films for remakes. It's apparent to anyone who knows about this that Hollywood took 47 years to discover that the work he was doing was worth something. He sold his sixth film in May of 2002, which will go on the drawing board before the end of the year. This gave him time to write a book about the days of Martin and Lewis, “Dean and Me, A Love Story” which was published in 2005. Jerry continues to conduct seminars on laughter and healing, in addition to maintaining an extensive touring schedule that takes him across the United States and Australia. He's also back on the Las Vegas stage, having recently signed a 20-year contract to make six appearances a year at the Orleans Hotel and Casino for his friend, Michael Gaughan. Jerry made sure that the contract was valid so he insisted upon the clause that stated when he is 94 he can work with a walker! Currently Jerry and his writing staff -- Bill Richmond, Richard Belzer, Max Alexander and Michael Andrew -- are preparing for “The Nutty Professor,” a musical to open on Broadway in the fall of 2008.

As for his work with MDA, as long as neuromuscular diseases continue to attack “Jerry's kids,” Jerry will be there to fight back. So when Jerry Lewis sings “You'll Never Walk Alone” to signal the end of another Telethon ... that's just his way in renewing the promise that he first made to “his kids” back in 1949.

It's a promise he fully intends to keep.

The Muscular Dystrophy Association has copyrighted phrases coined by Jerry either prior to, during or following many Telethons, such as:

1. “Jerry's Kids”
2. “Love Network”
3. “For the Right Reasons”
4. “86 Days to Air.”

May 2004 - Jerry was given the Pierce College Doctorate of Humanity Letters Degree in New Hampshire.

January 2005 - The Los Angeles International Press Academy presented him with the Nikola Testa Award in recognition of visionary achievements of advanced entertainment, technology cinematography for his "video assist."

February 2005 - Jerry received a Lifetime Achievement Award (the "Golden Camera") from the Berlin Film Festival plus a Lifetime Achievement Award (The "Golden Bear") for achievement in directing.

September 2005 - The Television Academy honored him with the Governor's Emmy Award for Lifetime Achievement.

February 2006 - In Paris the French Culture Minister, Ranaud de Vabres presented him with a medal and induction into the Legion of Honor as "Legion Commander."

February 2006 - As promised, Jerry hosted the Berlin Film Festival in Germany.

June 2006 - The Friar's Club in New York City "roasted" Jerry and made him the Abbot of the New York Friar's.

For more about Jerry Lewis, see www.jerrylewiscomedy.com on the Internet. For more about the Muscular Dystrophy Association, go to www.mda.org on the Internet.